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Divergence in Qibla Direction Determination: A Fiqh-Based Analysis and Its Societal Implementation

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Abstract: *This study explores the social reality surrounding discrepancies in Qibla direction among mosques in Palembang City, which, based on astronomical and scientific assessments, have proven to be inaccurate. The research aims to analyze community responses to these directional inconsistencies and to propose solutions that integrate modern technology and astronomical science into religious practice in a more thoughtful and contextually sensitive manner. Employing a sociological framework rooted in ethnographic and cultural anthropological approaches, the study collected data through Qibla recalibration observations, in-depth interviews, and literature review. The findings were analyzed using a descriptive qualitative method, complemented by astronomical and scientific perspectives. The results reveal that the misalignment of Qibla direction in many mosques largely stems from reliance on approximate traditional methods (taqribi), shaped by local wisdom, and from limited understanding of precise astronomical calculations and digital calibration tools. Nevertheless, the community exhibits a socially harmonious and religiously tolerant stance, prioritizing Islamic brotherhood (ukhuwah Islamiyah) over strict alignment with the Shafi'i school's doctrinal precision. As a constructive step forward, this study suggests the need for community-based astronomical education and hands-on training in Qibla calibration applications. Such efforts can help improve directional accuracy while preserving social cohesion and preventing potential conflicts within religious communities.*

Introduction

In early 2010, the Indonesian public was stirred by widespread media reports revealing that approximately 80% of mosques in the country were misaligned in their Qibla direction (Ya'kub, 2010). The issue gained traction due to claims that tectonic shifts triggered by earthquakes and the movement of the Earth's plates were responsible for the deviation. As a result, many worshippers began to question the accuracy of the Qibla orientation they had long trusted (Ngamilah, 2016).

However, Ahmad Izzuddin (2006), a prominent scholar of Islamic astronomy (Ilmu Falak) from UIN Walisongo Semarang, refuted the notion that earthquakes were the cause. He argued that the inaccuracies stemmed from initial construction practices, where communities typically relied on rough estimations using cardinal directions rather than precise astronomical calculations.

This pattern has been observed across numerous regions in Indonesia, including in Palembang City. Many mosques, prayer rooms (mushalla), small worship spaces (surau or langgar), and even cemeteries were constructed without accurately determining the Qibla direction. In most cases, local communities made these decisions independently, without consulting qualified experts. In truth, the accurate determination of Qibla direction should ideally be based on two fundamental approaches: the angular method and the shadow method, both grounded in astronomical calculations (hisab falakiyah) and supported by modern science and information technology(Fauziah, 2018; Fitriyati & Ifrohati, 2018; Jayusman, 2022; Rahmi & Agustio, 2021; Wafiroh, 2018). These methods are already being utilized by official institutions such as the Regional Offices of the Ministry of Religious Affairs at both provincial and municipal levels, as well as by scholars at Islamic universities throughout Indonesia.

Within the framework of Islamic jurisprudence (fiqh), facing the Qibla (istiqbal al-qiblah) is unanimously regarded by scholars (fuqaha) as one of the essential conditions for the validity of prayer (ṣalāh). This obligation is clearly supported by both the Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), as explicitly mentioned in Surah Al-Baqarah verses 144, 149, and 150 (Daud & Kamalussafir, 2019; Faid et al., 2022; Pirti & Hoşbaş, 2023; Rusyd, n.d.). Wahbah az-Zuhaily, in his exegesis *At-Tafsir al-Munir*, affirms that facing the Qibla during prayer is obligatory, except in cases of necessity (ḍarūrah), such as fear, coercion, severe illness, or when one is in remote wilderness or traveling by vehicle and is unable to determine the correct direction. This exemption is exemplified in the hadith in which the Prophet is reported to have performed voluntary prayers on his mount while traveling between Makkah and Madinah (Azhari, 2003).

For residents of Makkah and pilgrims performing Hajj or Umrah near the Sacred Mosque (Masjid al-Haram), orienting toward the Qibla poses little challenge since the Kaaba is physically visible. However, for Muslims living far from Makkah, such as those in Indonesia, determining the Qibla direction can be more complex. During the Prophet's lifetime, directional questions could be directly clarified by him. After his passing, such religious matters, including Qibla orientation, were addressed by the companions using the Qur'an, hadiths, and consensus (ijmā').

Understanding the legal foundation of facing the Qibla as revealed by Allah in the Qur'an and transmitted by the Prophet through hadiths underscores the significance of proper orientation during acts of worship, particularly prayer. This awareness can be enhanced through astronomical knowledge (ilm al-falak), especially since determining Qibla direction often involves technical calculations that some Muslims may find challenging (Jamil et al., 2022; Nizam, 2021). Therefore, this study argues for a renewed review of the foundational rulings (dalīl) to articulate a more coherent and practical framework for Qibla accuracy, ultimately aiming to enhance the spiritual quality and correctness of Muslim worship.

Among Islamic legal scholars (fuqaha), differing views persist regarding the proper Qibla direction for Muslims living far from the Kaaba. Some jurists insist on facing the *'ayn al-Ka'bah*, the precise physical location of

the Kaaba while others maintain that it is sufficient to face the general direction (*jihat al-Ka'bah*) toward the Sacred Mosque (Rakhmadi et al., 2022; Zuhaili, 2000). Disagreements surrounding Qibla orientation often arise within what may be described as the cultural-spiritual domain, where any alteration to the established direction is seen by some as contradicting long-held doctrinal beliefs. This resistance to change has, in many cases, led to tensions or disputes within mosques or prayer rooms (mushalla), especially when adjustments to the Qibla are proposed. Such attitudes may help explain why many mosques in Palembang continue to use misaligned directions.

While modern tools such as Qibla compass applications on mobile phones are increasingly used by the public to determine prayer direction, these must be supplemented with proper understanding of Islamic astronomy (ilm al-falak), particularly the angular and shadow-based methods derived from astronomical calculation (hisab) and modern science. This integration is crucial to fostering both spiritual assurance and communal trust in worship practices. Nonetheless, even the most accurate technical solutions may fall short if not accompanied by a thoughtful social approach. Differences in jurisprudential schools (mazhab), cultural backgrounds, educational levels, and local traditions can become sources of friction, potentially escalating into broader communal conflict (Faiz, 2020).

Numerous previous studies have addressed Qibla determination methods. For instance, Awaluddin et al. (2016) compared the accuracy of using ellipsoidal, spherical, and Mercator map models. Their findings showed that the ellipsoidal model yielded the smallest deviation. Moreover, the annual *rashdul qibla* (solar alignment) method unaffected by Earth's shape assumptions has been proposed as a practical resolution to the ongoing debate between proponents of the spherical/ellipsoidal Earth models and flat-earth adherents (Akbar & Mustaqim, 2020).

In principle, the accuracy of Qibla determination depends heavily on how the instruments are used. For instance, the Miqat mobile application requires proper calibration of the phone's magnetic compass before it can produce reliable results. Furthermore, it is essential to ensure that such applications are operated in metal-free environments to avoid magnetic interference (Ami & Ifrohati, 2022). Akbar et al. (2022) argue that individuals capable of applying the Vincenty formula in Qibla calculations should abandon the traditional spherical trigonometry model. This recommendation is grounded in the legal-ethical concept of *ijtihād*, which emphasizes the need for competence (*ahliyah*) and earnest effort (*juhd*), alongside the Shafi'i school's principles for resolving differences in Qibla-related *ijtihād*, and the fiqh maxim stating that certainty cannot be overruled by doubt. Elhas et al. (2024) suggest that misalignment in Qibla direction often stems from a lack of understanding of astronomical principles. Meanwhile, Putra et al. (2024) emphasize that disputes over Qibla direction should not lead to community division, since any action not in conflict with the Qur'an and contributing to public welfare (*maṣlaḥah*) is considered acceptable within Islamic law.

These prior studies primarily addressed the technical methodologies for determining Qibla direction, the causes behind directional discrepancies, and jurisprudential disagreements on the issue. While this study shares some

thematic overlap, it departs significantly in focus and scope. It aims to re-examine the jurisprudential foundations of the obligation to face the Qibla, while also exploring the socio-religious dynamics surrounding the issue in Palembang City. In particular, this research investigates community responses to Qibla corrections and evaluates how technological tools and astronomical knowledge can be wisely integrated into religious life.

This study is grounded in the assumption that Qibla misalignment is not solely a matter of technical inaccuracy, but also involves sociocultural factors, limited public literacy in astronomical jurisprudence, and resistance to changes perceived as contradicting established religious norms. Therefore, resolving this issue requires more than technical precision, it calls for educational, communicative, and culturally sensitive strategies that can mitigate potential conflicts and enhance the overall quality of Muslim worship.

Method

This study employed a sociological approach rooted in ethnographic and cultural anthropological methods, using a qualitative descriptive research design. Data collection techniques included in-depth interviews, direct observations, and literature review. The data gathered combined both field research and library research, analyzed through the interdisciplinary lens of Islamic astronomy (ʿilm al-falak) and modern science. Observations involved the recalibration of Qibla directions in mosques, prayer rooms (musalla), and grave orientations using scientifically formulated astronomical calculations (hisab falakiyah). Qibla recalibration data were obtained from the Palembang City Office of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, serving as a technical reference. In-depth interviews were conducted with mosque and musalla administrators, academic experts, officials from relevant institutions, and representatives from major Islamic organizations such as Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and Muhammadiyah. The interviews explored participants' understanding of Qibla determination and their reactions to recalibration outcomes.

The study was carried out at ten selected mosque and musalla locations across Palembang City. These sites were purposively chosen based on preliminary information suggesting possible Qibla misalignment. Research participants included mosque managers, religious leaders, local representatives of NU and Muhammadiyah, and officials from the local Ministry of Religious Affairs. Data analysis followed a qualitative descriptive approach, interpreting observation and interview findings systematically and comparing them with both classical and contemporary literature on Islamic astronomy, as well as with local socio-religious practices.

Results and Discussion

Analysis of Qibla Direction Accuracy Based on Recalibration Data

Accurate Qibla alignment in mosques and prayer spaces is of critical importance, as deviations in orientation may lead to social tensions within the community (Akbar & Asman, 2020). The standard of accuracy in Qibla determination is shaped by how an observer performs the calculations, particularly whether they apply *taqribi* (approximate) or *tahqiqi* (precise)

methods in accordance with proper procedures derived from Islamic astronomical principles (*hisab falakiyah*) supported by reliable instrumentation. These procedures aim to minimize the limitations inherent in each method. The assessment of Qibla direction across sub-districts in Palembang aligns with the author's own astronomical calculations, which place the city's geographic coordinates at latitude 2° 59' S and longitude 104° 47' E. Based on these coordinates, the Qibla azimuth is 24° 33′ from the west toward the north, or 65° 27′ from true north toward the west.

Calibration data collected from 2016 to 2021 revealed that 260 mosques in Palembang had inaccurate Qibla alignment according to falakiyah standards, while only 20 mosques were found to have precise orientations. These include: Masjid Kyai Marogan (Kertapati), Masjid Lawang Kidul (Ilir Timur II), Jami' Muhammadiyah Balayudha, Masjid Taqwa (Bukit Kecil), Al Hikmah (UMP Plaju), Al Hidayah (Tangga Takat), Jami'atus Islamiyah (Ilir Timur I), Al Furqan (Kebun Bunga), Nurul Yakin (Bukit Kecil), Nurul Hidayah (Ilir Timur II), Al Ikhlas (Kolonel Sulaiman Amir, Alang-Alang Lebar), Insanul Kamil (Jl. Kelapa Gading), Baiturrahman (OPI), Miftahul Falah (Jl. Sultan Mahmud Badaruddin II, Sukarami), Darul Muttaqin (Maskerebet Raya, Talang Kelapa), Cahaya Iman (Jl. Sersan Sani, Kemuning), Miftahul Jannah (Komplek Bougenville), Nurul Islam (Naskah), Darul Muttaqin (UIN Raden Fatah campus), and Masjid PT. KAI Divre III (Plaju). In addition to these, 139 more mosques, prayer rooms, and cemetery orientations were recalibrated between 2016 and 2019 during the author's tenure at the Palembang Ministry of Religious Affairs, followed by another 121 between 2020 and 2021. Thus, a total of 280 locations were measured, out of 1,214 registered mosques and 904 musalla in Palembang, according to the South Sumatra Provincial Office of the Ministry of Religious Affairs. These findings indicate that the majority of worship facilities have yet to realign their Qibla based on accurate astronomical calculations supported by modern science.

This data highlights several key issues: the lack of adequate outreach from relevant authorities (i.e., the Palembang Religious Affairs Office) to mosque committees about the urgency of Qibla accuracy; the weak implementation of falak-based technologies; and limited public awareness regarding the importance of accurate orientation, especially during the early phases of mosque construction. These results echo Izzuddin's (2011) study in Central Java, which reported that many mosques were misaligned because their orientation followed local road layouts or aesthetic considerations rather than the scientifically determined Qibla direction. A similar case occurred at the Grand Mosque of Baitul Makmur in Meulaboh, where poor involvement of religious leaders during the initial construction phase contributed to directional inaccuracies. Efforts to correct the misalignment were stalled due to congregational preferences and a tendency to adhere to their local scholars' interpretations (Mustaqim & Akbar, 2021).

Social and Religious Responses to the Qibla Direction Fatwa

In an effort to provide public guidance on Qibla orientation, the Indonesian Council of Ulama (*Majelis Ulama Indonesia* or MUI) issued Fatwa No. 3 of 2010. In its legal provision, the fatwa states: *"Given Indonesia's*

geographical location to the east of the Kaaba/Makkah, the Qibla for Indonesian Muslims is to face west." However, this statement drew criticism from academics and Islamic astronomy (*ilmu falak*) practitioners, who argued that it contained a potentially misleading oversimplification. In response to this feedback, the MUI's Fatwa Commission released Fatwa No. 5 of 2010 on Qibla Direction, which served as a revision of Fatwa No. 3, though the original fatwa has never been formally repealed. The revised fatwa clarified and corrected earlier statements, aligning them more closely with both fiqh principles and astronomical accuracy. The key provisions of Fatwa No. 5/2010 are as follows:

1. For those who are praying and have direct visibility of the Kaaba, the Qibla is the physical structure of the Kaaba (*'ain al-Ka'bah*).
2. For those who cannot directly see the Kaaba, the Qibla is the general direction toward it (*jihah al-Ka'bah*).
3. The Qibla direction for Muslims in Indonesia is toward the northwest, with specific azimuth angles varying according to geographical location.

Fatwa No. 5 of 2010, issued by the Indonesian Council of Ulama (*Majelis Ulama Indonesia* or MUI), stipulates that the Qibla for Indonesian Muslims is toward the Kaaba in the Masjid al-Haram, with directional adjustments tailored to each region's geographic position. Although normative in nature, the fatwa has not been uniformly implemented in practice. Many mosques have yet to recalibrate their Qibla direction, which may be attributed to limited technical understanding, the cost of recalibration, or the absence of administrative requirements from local authorities to mandate verification.

Interviews with Drs. H. Yeri Taswin, M.Pd.I, and the Head of the Palembang City Office of the Ministry of Religious Affairs reveal that public support for the fatwa is relatively strong, especially among mosque administrators (*takmir*) who possess a basic understanding of Islamic astronomy (*ilmu falak*). However, resistance to changing Qibla orientation persists in certain communities.

Such resistance, as described by Usman Qosim, S.Ag., S.Pd., the chairman of Miftahul Falah Mosque on Sultan Mahmud Badaruddin II Street, Alang-Alang Lebar subdistrict (Km. 11), is not merely a matter of ignorance. Rather, it is rooted in local cultural values and concerns over potential social discord. This phenomenon underscores the importance of adopting a sociocultural approach in Qibla recalibration efforts. It aligns with Max Weber's theory of social action, which posits that human behavior is shaped not only by instrumental rationality but also by deeply held value-based beliefs. Therefore, to effectively implement the fatwa, a combination of sociocultural sensitivity and educational outreach is essential.

Case Studies on Qibla Direction Adjustment

In several mosques across Palembang City, mosque administrators have chosen to prioritize aesthetic harmony and interior design over correcting Qibla misalignment. This highlights a common preference for visual and symbolic considerations rather than adherence to precise astronomical (falakiyah) calculations. For example, at Tarbiyah Islamiyah Mosque in the

Pinang Indah housing complex, Jakabaring, recalibration results showed a deviation of more than 30 degrees from the correct Qibla direction. Nevertheless, the mosque committee rejected any adjustment, citing concerns over maintaining congregational unity and preserving the visual symmetry of the mosque's interior.

A similar case was observed at Al-Muhajirin Mosque in the OPI Complex, Jakabaring. According to Drs. H. Hayatuddin, one of the mosque administrators, the committee initially agreed to a re-evaluation but later declined to implement the recalibrated direction due to aesthetic and architectural concerns. In contrast, Dr. Jayusman, M.Ag., an expert in Islamic astronomy from UIN Raden Intan Lampung, emphasized that correcting the Qibla direction does not require structural renovation. Instead, it can be addressed by subtly adjusting the prayer rows (*saf*) to align with the correct direction an approach that can be implemented elegantly, without disrupting the architectural integrity of the mosque.

These examples illustrate the structural flexibility available in realigning the Qibla without compromising architectural values, especially when accompanied by constructive communication from astronomical scholars. This demonstrates that Qibla accuracy and architectural aesthetics are not mutually exclusive, and that moderate, dialogic approaches, such as those advocated by Abdul Karim Faiz (2020) can foster communal acceptance and harmony.

A Fiqh-Based Approach to Qibla Direction Discrepancies

The Qibla direction is one of the fundamental conditions for the validity of prayer (*ṣalāh*) and has been a central topic of scholarly discourse since the classical period of Islamic jurisprudence. Differences of opinion regarding Qibla orientation have emerged due to diverse geographic conditions, the varying ability of individuals to see the Kaaba directly, and the methodological approaches used in deriving legal rulings (*istinbāṭ al-ḥukm*).

Generally, the scholarly views on Qibla direction can be categorized into two main groups. The first pertains to those who are able to see the Kaaba. Scholars are in agreement that anyone with a direct line of sight to the Kaaba is obligated to face the actual physical structure (*'ayn al-Ka'bah*). Ibn Qudāmah al-Maqdisī once stated, *"If someone sees the Kaaba directly, it is obligatory for him to face it precisely"* (Qudāmah, n.d.). On this matter, scholars from the Shāfi'ī, Ḥanbalī, and Ḥanafī schools concur that the Qibla for someone in or near Makkah must be the precise direction of the Kaaba (*'ayn al-Ka'bah*). If a person resides in Makkah or within close proximity, their prayer is invalid unless they directly face the Kaaba so long as this is reasonably possible. However, if direct alignment is not feasible, one must engage in *ijtihād* to determine the correct direction toward the Kaaba. Merely facing its general direction (*jihah al-Ka'bah*) is insufficient for residents of Makkah. Nevertheless, jurisprudence allows some flexibility in exceptional circumstances. For example, if a person in Makkah is situated on a mountain, or within a high-rise building where it is not practically possible to face the *'ayn al-Ka'bah* with certainty, then it is permissible to

face the best estimated direction based on available indicators (Al-Jaziri, n.d.).

Furthermore, Imam Mālik's opinion on the Qibla direction for those residing in Makkah is not significantly different. According to him, individuals living in or near Makkah are strictly obligated to face the exact structure of the Kaaba (*'ayn al-Ka'bah*) during prayer. All parts of the body must be oriented toward the physical building itself; it is not sufficient to merely face a general direction or a symbolic indicator pointing to the Kaaba (Al-Jaziri, n.d.).

The second category concerns those who are unable to see the Kaaba directly due to geographic distance. On this matter, scholars have expressed varying opinions (Kuwait Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs, 1992). The majority of Ḥanafī scholars maintain that in such cases, it is sufficient to face the general direction of the Kaaba (*jihah al-Ka'bah*), meaning the orientation of the *mihrab* wall that symbolically points toward the Kaaba. Thus, the Qibla is the direction toward Makkah, not the physical structure itself (*'ayn al-Ka'bah*) (Al-Jaziri, n.d.; Ya'kub, 2010).

This position is rooted in the reasoning of Abū Ḥanīfah, the Ḥanafī school's founder based in Kufa, who largely derived legal rulings from the Qur'an and the Prophet's traditions (Asy-Syarqawi, 2000). The Ḥanafī argument centers around the legal principle that one is only obligated to do what is humanly possible (*al-maqdūr 'alayh*). Facing the exact structure of the Kaaba is considered beyond one's capacity for those at a distance, and therefore, is not required. However, some Ḥanafī scholars disagree, asserting that it remains obligatory to face the precise structure (*'ayn al-Ka'bah*) through *ijtihād* and reasoned effort. One such view was advanced by Ibn 'Abdillāh al-Baṣrī, who argued that the intention to face the Kaaba's structure is a necessary condition for the validity of prayer (Asy-Syarqawi, 2000).

The Ḥanafī school's reasoning is rooted in the principle that religious obligations are confined to what is realistically achievable, as expressed in the legal maxim *al-maqdūr ʿalayh* (المقدور عليه). Accordingly, facing the exact physical structure of the Kaaba (*ʿayn al-Kaʿbah*) is not obligatory for individuals situated far from Makkah, as doing so is beyond their capacity. Instead, it suffices for them to face its general direction, known as *jihah al-Kaʿbah*. However, some Ḥanafī scholars diverge from this position. Ibn ʿAbdillāh al-Baṣrī, for example, maintained that one is obligated to face the precise Kaaba through sincere *ijtihād* and careful investigation. He further argued that the intention to face the actual Kaaba constitutes a fundamental condition for the validity of prayer (Asy-Syarqawi, 2000).

Among Mālikī and Ḥanafī jurists, there is agreement that anyone able to view the Kaaba directly must orient themselves toward the structure itself (*ʿayn al-Kaʿbah*). In contrast, those unable to view it due to geographical distance are permitted to face its general direction, relying on *ẓann* (reasoned assumption) that they are oriented correctly. This opinion is supported by the Qur'anic verse: *"So turn your face toward al-Masjid al-Ḥarām"* (Qur'an 2:144), which is phrased as **فَوَلِّ وَجْهَكَ شَطْرَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ** rather than **فَوَلِّ وَجْهَكَ شَطْرَ الْكَعْبَةِ**, indicating that facing any direction aligned with the

Sacred Mosque is sufficient, even if it is not aimed precisely at the Kaaba itself (Shabuni, 1983).

According to the Mālikī and Ḥanafī positions, a person who is unable to face the Qibla due to severe illness and who lacks assistance in determining the correct direction is exempted from this obligation. In such cases, it is permissible to pray in any direction. Similarly, if a person fears for their safety or the protection of their property from enemies, they may face any direction they can manage, and their prayer remains valid. This is in line with the legal concession: **يسقط وجوب الاستقبال في حالة العجز** ("The obligation to face the Qibla is waived in cases of incapacity"). Likewise, someone who performs prayer while forgetting to face the Qibla is not required to repeat it; however, it is recommended: **من نسي القبلة فصلاته صحيحة ويستحب إعادتها** ("Whoever forgets the Qibla, his prayer is valid, but it is recommended to repeat it").

Imām al-Shāfiʿī, in *Al-Umm*, stressed the importance of *ijtihād* in identifying the Qibla using natural signs such as the sun, moon, stars, wind, and geographical landmarks. This approach corresponds with the Qur'anic guidance: **وَهُوَ الَّذِي جَعَلَ لَكُمُ النُّجُومَ لِتَهْتَدُوا بِهَا فِي ظُلُمَاتِ الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ** (*"And it is He who made the stars for you, that you may be guided by them through the darknesses of the land and the sea"*; Qur'an 6:97).

According to the Ḥanbalī school, the ruling on Qibla orientation fundamentally aligns with the view of the Mālikī school: for a person who is far from the Kaaba and cannot see its physical structure, it is sufficient to rely on strong presumption (*ẓann ghālib*). The Ḥanbalī school presents its position systematically in four categories:

1. A person who is absolutely certain about the direction of the Kaaba or is able to see it directly whether partially obstructed by walls, fences, or other barriers is obligated to face the exact physical structure of the Kaaba (*ʿayn al-Kaʿbah*).
2. A person who is near the Kaaba but unable to see it and does not know its direction is required to follow the guidance of someone who does know. In this case, taqlīd (legal reliance) on a knowledgeable individual is obligatory.
3. A person who does not fall under the two previous conditions but has access to signs or indicators to determine the Qibla, such as natural or geographical cues is required to perform *ijtihād* to establish the direction to the best of their ability.
4. A person who is blind or otherwise incapable of determining the Qibla independently, and whose condition differs from the previous categories, is required to follow (*taqlīd*) the judgment of a qualified *mujtahid* (Daud, 2014).

The differences of opinion among Islamic scholars regarding Qibla orientation, particularly concerning individuals who are unable to see the Kaaba reflect the breadth and flexibility of Islamic law in addressing the diverse conditions of the Muslim community. These differences do not stem from fundamental contradictions in principle, but rather from variations in legal reasoning methodologies (*istinbāṭ al-ḥukm*), geographic contexts, and the

level of precision available in Qibla determination during different historical periods. Thus, such divergences should be viewed as part of the rich intellectual legacy of Islamic jurisprudence, rather than as sources of conflict. In fact, they open space for expansive and adaptive *ijtihād*, responsive to both the passage of time and the advancement of technology, particularly in the field of astronomical calculation (*hisāb falakiyah*). A respectful attitude toward differing opinions, grounded in a spirit of scholarly tolerance and *ukhūwah* (Islamic brotherhood), is essential. This allows the Muslim community to benefit from each perspective within its appropriate context, without falling into the trap of mutual blame or sectarianism.

Religious Moderation as a Solution to Qibla Direction Discrepancies

The differences in Qibla orientation found in Palembang City, as revealed in this study, are not solely attributable to divergent schools of thought or technical misunderstandings. They are also shaped by socio-religious and cultural factors. In this context, religious moderation (*moderasi beragama*) emerges as a strategic and constructive approach to navigating diverse viewpoints. In an interview with Ustadz Muhammad Nur, S.Ag, the mosque administrator (*takmīr*) of Tarbiyah Islamiyah Mosque, he expressed his rejection of the Qibla recalibration results. Nevertheless, he emphasized the importance of maintaining congregational unity and social stability as higher priorities. This attitude reflects a form of practical moderation grounded in the local context, an effort to uphold *ukhūwah Islāmiyyah* (Islamic brotherhood) despite differing opinions.

Likewise, Usman Qosim emphasized the importance of open dialogue between Qibla calibration teams and congregants to prevent suspicion and potential conflict. He recommended that astronomical education (*ilmu falak*) be conducted in a participatory and communicative manner, allowing the community to feel respected and to understand the rationale behind changes to the Qibla direction. The findings of this study indicate that the Muslim community in Palembang predominantly adherents of the Shāfiʿī school, which normatively obligates orientation toward the *ʿayn al-Kaʿbah*, in practice exhibits a more open and moderate stance. This is reflected in their tolerance of Qibla direction differences between mosques, acceptance of recalibration outcomes, and a strong commitment to maintaining *ukhūwah Islāmiyyah* (Islamic brotherhood) in the face of potential conflict.

This attitude is closely tied to the application of moderation values within Qibla-related fiqh, as outlined by Abdul Karim Faiz (2020). First, honesty presenting the scientific results of Qibla calculation transparently and without embellishment. Second, openness a willingness to accept data corrections, input from astronomical experts, and differing religious opinions. Third, compassion (*ra'fah*) responding to differences in a manner that avoids discord among mosque congregants. Fourth, flexibility acknowledging that in some technical or social circumstances, enforcing an absolute standard (i.e., *ʿayn al-Kaʿbah*) is neither feasible nor necessary.

This concept of moderation aligns with Max Weber's theory of social action, which suggests that individual behavior in this case, that of congregants and mosque administrators (*takmīr*) is motivated by social values

aimed at preserving harmony. The notion of religious moderation is also reinforced by the theory of *fiqh waṭaniyyah* developed by Abdul Karim Faiz and Abu Yazid, which emphasizes key principles such as balance (*tawāzun*), tolerance (*tasāmuḥ*), and justice (*iʿtidāl*) in the exercise of Islamic legal reasoning (*ijtihād*).

This study demonstrates that the moderate attitude of the Palembang Muslim community is shaped by several key factors:

1. An awareness that Qibla direction discrepancies within a margin of less than two degrees, according to astronomical calculation (*hisāb*), are not considered significant from a sharʿī (legal-religious) perspective, as confirmed by Prof. Jalaluddin.
2. Local traditions and social values emphasize the importance of *ukhūwah* (brotherhood) and social order, which prevents technical issues such as Qibla direction from becoming sources of division within the community.
3. The active role of religious leaders, scholars, and the Ministry of Religious Affairs, who prioritize educational and communicative approaches when presenting Qibla recalibration results to the public.

The implications of these findings suggest that the application of moderate fiqh in matters of Qibla orientation can serve as a model for addressing other potentially contentious issues in Islamic jurisprudence, particularly those related to the technical aspects of worship (*ʿibādah*). The community's openness to Qibla recalibration demonstrates that scientific approaches, when delivered through dialogue and empathy, can be well received. In this regard, Qibla moderation represents a convergence point between textual revelation (*naṣṣ*), scientific reasoning, and local wisdom, all oriented toward ensuring both *maṣlaḥah* (public benefit) and the spiritual integrity of worship.

This study challenges the common perception that the Shāfiʿī school is inherently rigid in legal application, showing instead that socio-cultural context can moderate religious practice without compromising the essence of Sharīʿah. Moreover, the research highlights an effective model of collaboration between Islamic astronomy (ʿilm al-falak), MUI fatwas, and social communication, offering a harmonious framework for resolving worship-related issues.

Conclusion

The inaccuracy of Qibla orientation in many mosques and burial directions across Palembang City is primarily due to a lack of public awareness regarding the importance of directional precision as an integral part of worship. In practice, the orientation of mosques, prayer rooms (*mushalla*), small community mosques (*langgar*), and cemetery complexes has often relied on *taqribi* methods rooted in traditional knowledge and local wisdom that have long been customary among the community. These methods continue to be used largely because of limited understanding of Qibla determination techniques grounded in *hisāb falakiyah* (astronomical calculation), as well as

underutilization of modern tools and technologies developed for precise Qibla calibration.

The moderate socio-religious behavior exhibited by the Palembang Muslim community in responding to Qibla orientation discrepancies can be attributed to their prioritization of Islamic brotherhood (*ukhūwah Islāmiyyah*), unity, and social cohesion over personal or sectarian interests. This inclusive attitude stems from a shared assumption that disagreements if not handled with care may lead to division. The key contribution of this research lies in its conceptual and practical exploration of moderation in Qibla-related fiqh, which draws not only from normative legal sources but also from social, cultural, and technological considerations.

However, the study is limited in scope as it focuses solely on the context of Palembang City, with a relatively narrow pool of informants. In addition, the research methodology is confined to a qualitative approach. Future studies would benefit from combining quantitative and qualitative methods to produce a more comprehensive and generalizable analysis.

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